

Message Text

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60

ACTION EA-09

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R 051020Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5710

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

JUSMAGTHAI COURIER

C O N F I D E N T I A L NORFORN DISSEM BANGKOK 30580

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINS, CB, TH

SUBJECT: RECENT INSURGENT ACTIVITIES AND BORDER CLASHES

SUMMARY: RECENT LOCAL PRESS ARTICLES HAVE GIVEN PROMINENT
COVERAGE TO INSURGENT INCIDENTS AND BORDER CLASHES
AND HAVE SUGGESTED THERE IS AN INCREASED LEVEL OF
INSURGENT ACTIVITY. MISSION IS NOT CONVINCED THESE
INCIDENTS AS YET PROVE THAT THE INSURGENTS HAVE
CHANGED TACTICS. AN INCREASE IN VIOLENT INSURGENT
ACTIVITY IS EXPECTED AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, WHEN THE
RAINY SEASON IS ENDING. THE CT'S MAY BE REACTING
TO THE RECENT CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT IN BANGKOK.
HOWEVER, NEITHER SIDE IS EXPECTED TO SUSTAIN
INCREASED MILITARY ACTION FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD.
END SUMMARY:

1. THE BANGKOK PRESS HAS BEEN PROMINENTLY REPORTING
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RECENT ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT

(RTG) AND COMMUNIST TERRORISTS (CT), AND RTG BORDER CLASHES WITH CAMBODIAN FORCES (KC).

2. THE NOVEMBER 4 AND 5, 1976, EDITIONS OF THE BANGKOK WORLD AND BANGKOK POST CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLES ON ACTIONS IN THE PAST TWO DAYS, "REDS HOT UP ATTACKS," "CASUALTIES RISE AS GUERRILLAS STAGE ATTACKS", AND "THAI, KMER FORCES CLASH ON LAND, SEA." THE ARTICLES COVER NOVEMBER 3 AND 4 INCIDENTS IN WHICH THE CT INITIATED FOUR ATTACKS AND AMBUSHED TWO RTG PATROLS RESULTING IN 11 RTG DEAD VERSUS THREE CT KILLED. THEY ALSO CITE TWO BORDER INCIDENTS IN TRAT PROVINCE WITH KC FORCES WHICH DID NOT RESULT IN CASUALTIES. THE PRESS ARTICLES IMPLY THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN CT ACTIVITIES.

3. WE EXPECT AN INCREASE IN VIOLENT ACTIVITY BETWEEN THE RTG - CT AS THE RAINY SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE, BECAUSE THE CT MAY HAVE DECIDED TO PROBE THE NEW GOVERNMENT, AND BECAUSE THE NEW RTG MAY WANT TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH TANGIBLE PROOF OF ITS EFFORTS TO COUNTER THE COMMUNIST THREAT. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT YET CONVINCED THAT THESE INCIDENTS ARE HARBINGERS OF A NEW CT STRATEGY.

4. IN THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IN THAILAND IT IS NATURAL FOR THE PRESS TO DEVOTE INCREASED ATTENTION TO THE FREQUENTLY NEGLECTED RURAL INSURGENCY. NUMEROUS VIOLENT INCIDENTS OF A SIMILAR NATURE, IN THE SAME TRADITIONAL INSURGENCY AREAS, HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IN THE PAST BUT WERE UNDETECTED BY THE PRESS. PRESS COVERAGE AS SUCH IS A POOR GAUGE OF THE TEMPO OF THE THAI INSURGENCY. ONLY THE REPORTED STRENGTH OF THE CT IN MULTI-COMPANY SIZE UNITS IN SOME OF THE RECENT INCIDENTS SUGGESTS ANY CHANGE OF ACTIVITY IN THESE AREAS SINCE THE LAST DRY SEASON. WE WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT THE NUMBERS OF CT INVOLVED IN THESE SURPRISE ATTACKS IS THE MOST DUBIOUS STATISTIC REPORTED.

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5. IF THE CT OPT FOR SOME ACCELERATION IN THEIR ATTACKS ON MORE IMPORTANT RTG POSITIONS (THE RECENT ATTACKS HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED TO VILLAGE DEFENSE POSTS), OR SUSTAINED AND FREQUENT ATTACKS BY MULTI-COMPANY ELEMENTS, WE BELIEVE THEY WILL AGAIN SUFFER UNACCEPTABLE CASUALTY LEVELS AND WILL BE FORCED TO RETURN TO EMPHASIZING POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY ACTIONS, AS OCCURRED IN 1975. LIKEWISE, IF THE RTG BEGINS

CONCENTRATING ON SOLELY MILITARY SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS, WE BELIEVE THEY WILL MEET WITH ONLY PARTIAL SUCCESS AND WILL SUSTAIN POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE CASUALTY LEVELS. HOPEFULLY, THE RTG WILL FIND IT APPROPRIATE TO TURN TO COORDINATED COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS WITH SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPEMENT PROGRAMS INTERGRATED INTO THE MILITARY PROCESS, PROBABLY THROUGH THE INTERANL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND, IN A REORGANIZED CONFIGURATION OR COMMAND SYSTEM. IN ANY EVENT, WE DO NOT EXPECT EITHER SIDE TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN AN ACCELERATED LEVEL OF MILITARY OPERATIONS FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD.

6. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND REPORT DEVELOPMENTS THAT FIRMLY INDICATE CHANGED TACTICS ON EITHER SIDE.
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